FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Independent Party of Oregon Announces Legislative Nominations Across Key Districts, encourages more people to run for the Oregon legislature

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Salem - March 30 or 26 - The Independent Party of Oregon (IPO) today announced the nominations of Brian Schimmel (House District 29; Forest Grove, Hillsboro), Pat Hubbell (House District 40; Gladstone, Oregon City), Patrick Starnes (Senate District 6; Linn, Lane Counties), and Lisa Finkle (Senate District 16; Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook Counties). Three of these are currently open seats, without incumbents running. The party previously nominated Charlie Conrad at its January caucus for House District 12 (Lane, Linn Counties).

The party running its own candidates in state legislative races represents a shift for IPO. In previous years, the party has largely focused on cross-nominating Democratic and Republican candidates. In 2022 and 2024, the party sided heavily with Democratic legislators in the Oregon House and Senate, helping the Democrats to secure their current majorities through highly successful campaigns in legislative swing districts.

This year, for the first time, the party is holding caucuses ahead of the state primary to give its candidates more time to build campaigns. It will hold a fourth caucus in July to consider what major party candidates to cross-nominate, if any.

“A large number of qualified people stepping forward to run is unusual. It’s a sign that people are frustrated,” said Drew Kaza, the party’s co-chair. “People are starting to understand that the system is the problem. The lobbyists, the party machines. All of it. They are too polarized, too compromised, and too focused on what agencies or lobbyists want, instead of what Oregon communities need.”

“The Legislature is failing to deliver in areas like housing and education despite historic investments,” said Al Densmore, who serves on the party’s elected nominating caucus. “People see rising costs, struggling schools, and then watch transparency and campaign finance rules get weakened. It confirms what many already believe: That the system is tilted away from regular people.”

(**Note:** Densmore is a former Mayor of Medford and a State Representative who was the Chief House Sponsor of SB 15, Oregon's open meetings law. He is available for media inquiries.)

IPO will hold a third nominating caucus for candidates who are not seeking a major party nomination in May. IPO nominations are open to members of all political parties.

"We are looking for engaged people who have the time to run as Independents. Oregon needs problem-solvers who are not invested in the current system and who believe we can do better," Kaza said.

These are the candidates who were nominated in the March caucus:

Brian Schimmel (HD 29, Hillsboro–Forest Grove) brings decades of public and private sector leadership focused on housing, economic development, public safety, and community resilience. His work includes administering public investments and structuring partnerships across government, nonprofit, and private sectors. "Community institutions require solutions that function at the local level," Schimmel said. "Policy-making should reflect local insight and be structured for effective implementation—where outcomes are realized by those closest to the work."

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Pat Hubbell (HD 40, Oregon City) is a pharmacist that operates an independent pharmacy in Oregon that is focused on pharmacy reform. Hubbell highlights the pharmacy access disparity in Oregon and the high cost of medications. Hubbell states, "Oregon ranks dead last in the number of independent pharmacies in our communities out of all 50 states." This issue is a combination of poor, misunderstood legislative support and large PBM (Pharmacy Benefit Managers) bullying the state of Oregon.

Not only pharmacy, but physicians, nurses, and health care professionals are under the same level of economic pressures that are causing subpar or complete lack of care for Oregonians.

"I am here to gather healthcare professionals as we push for better work environments and proper reimbursements for positive healthcare outcomes, Hubbell said. Affordability, the environment, infrastructure, fiscal responsibility and strong, vibrant communities are also top priorities

Patrick Starnes (SD 6, Brownsville), a school board member and longtime advocate for campaign finance reform and affordability, is running as an economic populist. "People are tired of a system where big money and party leadership drive the agenda," Starnes said. "If we want to fix affordability, housing, healthcare, education, then we

need leaders to open up the process and actually listen to the people we represent." Starnes has been a relentless advocate for campaign finance reform, which good government groups say was gutted in the 2026 short session.

Melisa Finkle (SD 16, Rockaway Beach) is a state employee and union leader focused on rural healthcare, transparency, and worker advocacy. Finkle points to growing frustration with closed-door policymaking. "When decisions are rushed or made in small rooms, people lose trust," Finkle said. "Oregonians want leaders who listen, explain their decisions, and work across differences to solve real problems especially in rural communities like mine that often get overlooked."

This slate reflects a growing demand for leadership that is independent of political machine structures, focused on affordability and effective governance, and responsive to people who are left out and ignored by the current system